Dequillo, Avelina B.

TRAINING BLIND CHILDREN'S
RESPONSES TO SOUND.

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15 WEST 16th STREET
NEW YORK, N.Y., 10011

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A visually handicapped child depends upon his other senses to compensate for his deficiency in sight. Hearing, as one of the senses, is very important in the learning process of a blind child and needs to be stimulated.

Sound toys are very strong motivators in encouraging the child to learn through hearing. They are very effective means to capture the interest of the child who does not respond to sound nor does not respond appropriately to it. Training with sound toys will help make the child more aware of sound and help him acquire the ability to localize and discriminate. Sound toys also help foster good listening habits which can carry over into other areas of auditory training.

In teaching awareness of sound toys, help the child first to be able to use all his senses; then isolate the auditory component; and finally return to the use of all senses. For example, one of the first objects to be introduced is a beeping ball. Give the child opportunity to hold, look, listen, smell, or explore the object, using all his senses. Slowly, if necessary, due respect should be given to his readiness and willingness to accept it or time to experience it in whatever may be meaningful to him. In case the child has no interest in the beeping ball and its sound, the teacher gently places her hands over the child's hands and manipulates the ball with him. If the child is not at all interested and reluctant to touch the ball; then the teacher should play with it in such a way as to capture the interest of the child.

After ample multisensory exposures, turn on the sound of the beeping ball, outside the child's visual range. If the child reacts to the sound, let him play with it. In case he does not react, sound the ball again and place his hands on it. Let him play with it for awhile.

End the activity as it was begun, using all senses. In this way the child will experience the sound of the beeping ball in as complete and normal a way as possible.

In teaching location of sounds the child should be taught first to locate sounds near him and later to respond to further distant sounds. For example, sound a toy to his right or left side. If he can locate the sound, let him play with it. If he does not respond to the sound, let him play with it. If he does not respond to the sound, repeat the sound and direct his hands toward it. Once the child has mastered locating to the left and right; then present sounds in front of him, and behind him, above him and close to the floor. Avoid the midline; since sound presented equidistant between the two ears is more difficult to localize. When the child has mastered locating sounds near him, increase the distance of the sound and vary the direction of the sound. Hide and seek is an enjoyable activity that teaches localizing. The teacher sounds a favorite toy. One or more children look for it. The one who finds the toy hides with it and sounds it while the other children seek it.

In teaching discrimination of sounds be sure that the child is aware of and responsive to individual sounds before he can be expected to discriminate among them. For example, give the child a bell and let him examine and sound it; then let him place it on the table. Present another toy—a drum and let him examine and sound it. Show to the child that the teacher has a set of toys like his. The teacher sounds some of her toys outside of the child's visual range. The child selects from his own toys the one he thinks he heard and sounds it. Give him enough time to respond and help him only if he needs help. When the child is ready, increase the number and similarity of sound toys.

Train the child to respond to environmental sounds. Visually handicapped children are frightened or puzzled by sounds around them. Some of the sounds we hear in our everyday life may be upsetting to them. In order to reduce the fear of the children they should be encouraged to venture out into their environment to have a knowledge of sounds and their source and to understand what is happening around them. Some children are not frighttened nor puzzled by sounds around them, but they may be unresponsive to these sounds. They may also be responsive because of high interest to the sound they heard. Some children may also be more responsive to the sound of real objects than to those made by toys.

Examples of environmental sounds and categories:

1. General sounds: a knock at the door, door opening, closing, slamming, sliding, chair moving, scraping, objects dropped on the floor, on the table, or desk, telephone ringing, water running, flushing, dripping, food rattling in a container or packages, light switch on, off, turning on the lock, money and keys jingling, hair being brushed, lotion being squeezed from a bottle, coin purse being opened and closed, etc.

2. Human sounds: coughing, sneezing, laughing, crying, running, walking, whistling, yawning, stumbling, skipping, tripping, scratching, rubbing, clapping, clearing throat, hopping, etc.

3. Weather sounds: rain, wind, leaves rustling, thunder, lightning, etc.

4. Animal sounds: dog barking, cat meowing, etc.

5. Mechanical sounds produced by electricity: electric fan, lawn mower, sewing machine, hair dryer, electric polisher, electric wash-

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er, electric dryer, motor boat, motorcycle, airplane, train, etc.

To reduce fear of sounds that frighten or puzzle children, incidental training and planned training may be used to help the children identify sounds and their sources. Incidental sounds are those which occur in natural everyday situations. When a sound occurs which frightens or puzzles a child, stop whatever activity is being done. Point out what is producing the sound and acquaint him with the sound and source; then return to the original activity. In planned training we have to observe the child's reaction to environmental sounds. Find out which of these sounds upset him. If he is upset at a door slamming; then work on this activity. Identify the sound and its source. Let the child produce the sound. Repeat the activity as often as needed.

In teaching awareness, use real and favorite objects or snack food because they are of high interest or strong motivators to the children. The procedure of teaching is in the same manner as that used to present sound toys. Permit the child to use all senses, then isolate the auditory component and finally return to the use of all senses. Take the opportunities throughout the day to make the child aware of environmental sounds. For example, if somebody knocks at the door take the child with you to answer it or when the telephone rings, a water is running, etc.

In teaching location, use the same manner as that used with sound toys. Begin with a sound near the child, varying the direction and increasing the distance when the child is ready. Localization of environmental sounds should be incorporated into all activities throughout the day. If the child drops an object, let him listen and find it. If he is to wash his hands, have him listen to the running water and find the sink. If the child is to join others for an activity, have him listen and locate them by sound.

In teaching discrimination of sound the teacher can use the same procedure as those with sound toys; if she feels that the children enjoy or benefit from the exercises.

Visually handicapped children have also their potential and have the right to opportunity for learning. Each child can be helped to achieve his highest level of performance whatever it may be. The benefits are shared by the child, his parents, teachers, schools, and others who are involved in working with them.

Avelina B. Dequillo, Teacher

———o———

July

We go home for summer in July. That will be Thursday, July seventeenth. In July there is the fourth—that's a Friday. We have a picnic. We play some games outside, too. The big thing —we go home in July.

Estelle Bailey, Pupil

June 20

Mrs. Meade is coming the afternoon of June 20 to take me home. We will have a birthday party for my birthday. I will have a walkie talkie, an electric rain maker and an electric toy.

Gerard Winfrey, Pupil

———o———

Picnic

I had ice cream and cake and punch on the picnic. We went outside on the picnic.

Michael Scepanski, Pupil

———o———

Picnic

We had potato chips, ice cream, cake and punch and hot dogs. We played a balloon game and some other games.

Paul Kessock, Pupil

———o———

Birthday

My birthday is July 16, a Wednesday. I have to get up at 5:58 in the morning to go to the airport. Mr. Roberts drives the bus. I'll be going home on my birthday. I'll be nineteen. My mother will be giving me nineteen birthday spankings. I'm going to get the "Grand Old Opry" with Ralph Emory, Lester Flat and Earle Spriggs. This is a record.

Timothy Connolly, Pupil

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Summertime

I'm going home. In July I'm going to the airport. I'll have a good flight on the airplane. I'll be going on the bus to the airport. I'm going to wash dishes at home.

Craig Dickerson, Pupil

———o———

The Puzzle

I like to work with the puzzle. I want to learn how to do puzzles. I hugged the little wooden boys and girls in the puzzle. I asked Miss Michele many questions about the puzzle pieces.

Geraldine Steigerwalt, Pupil

———o———

Going Home

I want to go home. I will pack my suitcase. I want to see Mommy and Daddy.

Ellsworth Payne, Pupil

———o———

July

We go home in July. I like that. We have picnics. We do in July. I like July. We go home in July. Tim goes home.

Timmy Stull, Pupil

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